

Contributed

HIS GIFTS.

By Eliza Strang Baird.

God has led me, He has given,
Though the path be long,
On the way from earth to Heaven,
Many a song.

Through the valleys, down the mountain,
Still the glories gleam;
He has opened many a fountain,
Many a stream.

How His grace has overflowed me
With its wondrous dower,
Many a sunset He has showed me,
Many a flower.

Often has restored me double,
Made the shadows clear,
Rescued me from many a trouble,
Many a tear.

Then, for all this kind bestowing,
May I sing His praise,
'Till the debt to Him I'm owing
Through my days.

Praise the Lord for all He's spared me,
All the bounties given,
Since His mercies have prepared me
For His Heaven!

Orange, New Jersey.

THE DISCIPLINE OF THE CHURCH.

By Rev. T. E. Converse, D. D.

(Printed at request of Presbytery.)

III.

God Requires his Church to Discipline.

We have considered cases in which God personally administered discipline. Now turn we to passages of the Bible in which God has deputed this duty to the officers of the Church and has ordered them to exercise it.

When God organized the visible Church under Abraham, and instituted the sacrament of circumcision, he directed Abraham to see that it should be observed. And upon the man who should neglect it, he put an ecclesiastical penalty. "That soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant." This does not mean that he was to be sent into exile, but simply that he was to be excluded from covenant privilege, or as Christ expressed it, "Let him be unto thee as a heathen man."

When God instituted the sacrament of the Passover (Exodus 12), "Whoso eateth leavened bread, that soul shall be cut off from Israel." The like discipline applied in other cases; to him that touches an unclean thing and then while unclean partakes of the Passover. Leviticus 7:21; to him who should offer a sacrifice and refuse to make the offering at the tabernacle, (17:4); to him who should eat blood (17:10); to him that should treat his peace offering in a gluttonous way, feasting on it after the second day; to him that giveth any of his seed unto Molech (20:3); in all these cases

God required the ruler of his Church to excommunicate.

In the New Testament we find like orders from Christ to the rulers of his Church. Matthew 18:17. "If thy brother trespass against thee . . . and if he neglect to hear thee and to hear them, tell it unto the Church; and if he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man," and this amounts to excommunication.

In Acts 8:20, we find Peter exercising this duty. To Simon Magus he says, "Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter, . . . for I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity." Verse 24 shows that Simon Magus felt that he was under discipline.

In I. Corinthians, 5:4, we find Paul requiring the session of the church at Corinth to suspend the man who was guilty of incest from church membership. He orders them to "deliver such a one unto Satan, for the destruction of the flesh that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." In II. Corinthians Paul refers to this as "punishment." It was effective in that the spirit was saved; for we read that the discipline brought the erring one to repentance.

In I. Timothy Paul by example teaches Timothy, the young preacher, to exercise discipline. He says: "Hymeneus and Alexander, whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme." And in 5:17 he commends the "elders that rule well." And in 6:5, he orders Timothy to proceed if need be to excommunication. "If any man teach otherwise, . . . from such withdraw thyself."

Titus, 1:5. I. Peter, 5:2.

If Public Sentiment Fails to Sustain Discipline.

In conferring with my brethren about this duty, the reply has been made, that in the present state of the Church in this country, discipline is impracticable. That its efficacy depends very largely upon the concurrence of the members of the particular church, and at the present so large a proportion of the members are of low spiritual life that they do not see the discipline in its proper light and they sympathize with the erring one rather than with Christ, or his officers. What can we do?

In the realm of civil law there are analogous cases. At Reelfoot Lake lately public sentiment was intensely opposed to the punishment of those who had been involved in lynch law. Must the judge therefore forbear to hold court, or try the accused?

But the responsibility of church officers is more grave than of civil officers, and for the one reason that we must render our account to God direct.

But what says the Scripture? In the history of God's people there have been times when the spirit of the people was intensely antagonistic to the exercise of discipline, and the elders did not attempt it.

One such case was at Kadesh Barnea, in the wilderness. The twelve spies trespassed gravely, so gravely that God caused them to die by the plague. The elders of Israel ought to have exercised discipline. Public sentiment was against them, and they took no action. Then God disciplined the elders and the whole Church. He suspended the whole nation from the sacrament of cir-